

## **Danielle Talamantes: Reviews**

**Review for Catán's *Il postino* with Virginia Opera**

**Harrison Opera House**

**Virginia Gazette**

**November 11, 2019**

**by John Shulson**

*"As Beatrice, Virginia-born soprano Danielle Talamantes did the honors, displaying a crystalline voice...having the ability to float notes effortlessly in the air."*

**Review for *La traviata* with Hawaii Opera Theatre**

**Blaisdell Center for the Performing Arts**

**Honolulu Star-Advertiser**

**May 19, 2019**

**by Steven Mark**

"Soprano Danielle Talamantes gave a tour-de-force performance as the "fallen woman" Violetta, with her clear, penetrating and rangy voice sustaining the character throughout. She was fresh and open in the opening party scene, rolling off her "r's" with a juicy vivaciousness and lending delight and grace to the playful "Sempre Libera" aria.

*It seemed that even the stage props were enchanted — at one point, a vase of flowers tilted over as she was belting out a big note.*

*By Act 2, Talamantes' Violetta became passionate and vulnerable when she first meets her destiny, and by Act 3, when she is dying of consumption, Talamantes reduced her voice to a trembling vibrato that still permeated the hall with clarity and feeling.*

*She also had terrific chemistry with tenor Pene Pati as Alfredo, as the two engaged in some serious lip-locking that put the "hot" in HOT."*

**Review for Verdi's *Requiem* with the National Philharmonic**

**Music Center at Strathmore**

**The Zebra**

**April 14, 2019**

**Sara Dudley Brown**

*"I have heard Ms. Talamantes in her Metropolitan Opera role of Frasquita in "Carmen" and was not at all surprised at her consistent performance with an entirely unforced but totally focused voice which soared over the 300 or so choristers and orchestra members to the back of the hall. Her gleaming top and floating pianissimos in the Libera me left me breathless!"*

**Review for Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9***

**Carnegie Call with DCINY**

**New York Concert Review, Inc.**

**December 10, 2018**

**Rorianne Schrade**

*"Soprano, Danielle Talamantes, who is for this listener a new discovery and navigated the perilous high registers easily right up to the final "flügel Weit" before the prestissimo "last hurrah" of the work."*

**Review for Bernstein Choral Celebration with the National Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorale**

**MD Theatre Guide**

**November 21, 2018**

**Elle Marie Sullivan**

*"The evening started with selections from Bernstein's 'Mass,' which was commissioned by Jacqueline Kennedy in 1971. The piece is inspired by the Tentacdetine mass, but includes English and was intended to be a theatrical performance. The music ebbs and flows beautifully from traditional Latin mass melodies to jazz. It swells with joy. The Strathmore Children's Chorus joined the National Philharmonic Chorale and soloists Danielle Talamantes and Brian Cheney.*

*The music of "West Side Story" shaped American musical theatre composers for generations The National Philharmonic performed such iconic numbers as "Tonight," "I Feel Pretty," and "America," among many others. The evening ended with two beautiful pieces from "Candide:" "The Best of All Possible Worlds" and the hopeful victorious anthem "Make Our Garden Grow."*

*Talamantes' beautiful soprano soared throughout the Music Center, especially shining during "Tonight" and "Make Our Garden Grow." Her nimble vocal dexterity was also demonstrated in "Devotions Before Mass" from 'Mass.'"*

**Review for Heaven and Earth - A Duke Ellington Songbook**

**Fanfare**

**Jan/Feb 2018**

**Colin Clarke**

*"Danelle Talamantes' debut recording, Canciones españolas, was positively reviewed by my colleague Carla Maria Verdino-Süllwold in Fanfare 38:6. There, Talamantes's voice was described as "velvety and dark-hued." Quite rightly, too, as Talamantes's voice is perfect for Ellington's miniature masterpieces. It's good to see Ellington getting the recognition he deserves. Readers on the other side of the Atlantic from him, or ones who vacationed in the United Kingdom during the summer, perhaps caught some Ellington in the Prom concert entitled "Ella and Dizzy: A Centenary Tribute"; Harlem and Caravan both appeared.*

*The present album features arrangements by four musicians: the pianist Henry Dahlinger (pianist on this album), Larry Ham, Caren Levine, and Marvin Mills. To group them as concisely as possible, the listing in the title does not reflect the playing order of songs.*

*First up, though, is in fact Come Sunday—an Ellington favorite, clearly, as the song crops up in Ellington's symphony, Black, Brown and Beige. The recording by gospel singer Mahalia Jackson is itself a classic, her voice likewise smoky in the hence rather*

confusingly titled 1958 album *Black, Brown and Beige*. The booklet notes by Scott Parish on this MSR release are full of superlatives, as one might perhaps expect, but for once they are absolutely justified. Dehlinger's arrangement is superbly judged, from the lyricism through to the stride. Once could easily miss Talamantes's textbook but never his studied diction.

Inspired by the beginning of "a little rock-and-roll tune" by band leader Gerald Wilson, Ellington along with Billy Strayhorn produced what Scott Parrish's notes memorably refer to as a "wallflower's lament." Interestingly, Dehlinger's arrangement of this late work mixes in references to Ellington's *Black Beauty* (1929) and *C-Jam Blues* (1942), in effect uniting various decades of Ellington's creative output. Talamantes's swooping soprano tells the story of the wait for an invitation to dance. As her line gets ever more impassioned, the piano becomes ever more active; the final gestures include a free-floating melisma from Talamantes. The arrangement is a world away from Ella Fitzgerald's bold-as-brass account with Ellington himself and his orchestra on the 1965 album *Ella at Duke's Palace* (no preternaturally high screaming trumpet on MSR, even in piano imitation). The arrangements on this disc are terrifically imaginative, wide-ranging but absolutely in the spirit of Ellington.

The three arrangements by Larry Ham begin with the jazz standard *In a Sentimental Mood*. Apparently improvised in North Carolina one evening in 1935. Readers may recognize Ham's name from Renée Fleming's 1999 Decca album *Prelude to a Kiss*, where this arrangement was first recorded. The higher reaches of Talamantes's soprano voice at a medium dynamic level add real emotional punch to the work's close.

Whatever the undeniable beauty of her voice, Fleming's diction is just that bit too studied, and she does sound like an opera singer singing Ellington (which, after all, is what she is); Talamantes is more spontaneous sounding, and sounds more on home turf. And despite Fleming's excellent sense of pitch, Talamantes's is still more developed and, frankly, offers a greater source of joy.

The light touch of Dehlinger's arrangement of *Don't get around much anymore* is delightful; Dehlinger the pianist reveals his virtuoso side here. The move from big band hit to solo vocal/piano intimacy is a large one, but possibly not as large as the gap between those and the version by the Ink Spots (interestingly, this song held the No. 1 spot in the R&B charts in 1943 in both the Ellington and the Ink Spots' versions).

The whispered confession of *Sophisticated Lady* in this performance is most touching.

There is an easy to Talamantes's way with the vocal line that melds perfectly with Dehlinger's quasi-improvised accompaniment. The pepped-up arrangement of *I'm beginning to see the light* is by Caren Levine. The piano is gifted with what amounts to a cadenza, mirrored at the end by a passage of open vocal freedom. There is huge competition here, of course, in the form of Ella and Ellington (not to mention the even more upbeat Louis Armstrong); yet Talamantes has a voice all of her own. The 1934 ballad *Solitude* is heard in a Levine arrangement specifically targeted at the Talamantes/Dehlinger duo. There is the impression that time stops here.

The solo piano *Meditation* in Dehlinger's own arrangement expands the envelope of the original to a more intense experience than Ellington himself provided before we meet the only arrangement on the album by Marvin Mills, again written specifically for Talamantes and Dehlinger: *Heaven*. This is one of the lesser-recorded Ellington pieces, because for its awkward intervals (softened in effect here, perhaps, in comparison with

*the performance by Ellington's own octet). Mills also, inventively, replaces the original bossa nova beat later in the song with swing. Finally (and pardon the pun) an almighty outburst opens Almighty God has those Angels like a piano reduction from a film score, before the voice slowly unfolds the melody over a more rapid piano contribution.*

*Talamantes's voice later swoops like a bird in its higher regions.*

*It's a nice idea to top and tail the recital with pieces from Ellington's Sacred Concerts; one has to acknowledge, too, the excellence of Alice Babs in the original of Almighty God. But this is a simply superb album, stunningly recorded, that deserves every success."*

**Reviews for the Princeton Festival Opera's production as Marzelline in Beethoven's *Fidelio*:**

**CentralJersey.com Theatre Review**

**June 22nd, 2017**

**Bob Brown**

*"In the first of the opera's most-affecting arias, Marzelline sings of her love for Fidelio, imagining their life as a married couple. Talamantes's performance is thrilling, with power and emotion to spare."*

**Town Topics - a Princeton Community Newspaper**

**June 21st, 2017**

**Nancy Plum**

*"Borrowing from the Singspiel tradition, the more humorous side of Fidelio came out as Marzelline, daughter of the head jailor, declared her love for Leonore's alter-ego Fidelio, which Leonore went along with to gain further access to the prison and possibly Florestan. Sopranos Marcy Stonikas (Leonore) and Danielle Talamantes (Marzelline) were perfectly matched in vocal timbre, playing their characters as formidable and determined women unafraid of anything. Duets between the two were always clean, and the vocal spin on their collective sound was consistently uniform. Ms. Talamantes possessed a rich mezzo voice with strong coloratura technique and a solid foundation to the sound. She delivered her Act I aria proclaiming her love for Fidelio with delicacy and innocence, and along with her fellow principals, delivered the German dialog crisply."*

**Broad Street Review**

**June 19th, 2017**

**Linda Holt**

*"In a pert sexy dress and high heels with attitude to spare, Talamantes looks like one of the sassy stars of the TV series Devious Maids. Her soprano voice is youthful but full of intense feeling, expressing both great longing and frustration regarding her thwarted advances. Her duets with Stonikas are a marvel to hear..."*

**The Roanoke Times**

**Review for Opera Roanoke's production of Floyd's *Susannah***

**April 29th, 2017**

**Gordon Marsh**

*"Soprano Danielle Talamantes gives a thrilling and memorable performance as Susannah Polk. Talamantes' instrument commands the full scope of expression and blend (not to mention range) demanded by the role, and her acting is riveting. Her Susannah delivers the girlish innocence, impassioned desperation and bitter resignation the evening demands."*

**The Washington Post**

**Review for the Brahms *Requiem* and Leshnoff's *Zohar* with the National Philharmonic**

**March 20, 2017**

**Charles T Downey**

*"Soprano Danielle Talamantes was the highlight of the Brahms, a warm, consoling presence in the fifth movement..."*

**The Spokesman-Review**

**Review for Finale Concert in the Northwest Bach Festival**

**March 6, 2017**

**Larry Lapidus**

*"For Sunday's finale of the 2017 classics concert series, the Northwest Bach Festival exchanged the geniality of Barrister Winery, which served so well for concerts of chamber music, to the grandeur of the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. This allowed for not only more players, but for a different class of music, intended for performance in a larger acoustical space.*

*Returning after an immensely successful appearance at last year's Bach festival was conductor Piotr Gajewski to conduct four works for chamber orchestra: the Serenade No. 13 in G major, K. 525, "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" of W.A. Mozart; Cantata BWV 51, "Jauchzet Gott in Allen Landen," by J.S. Bach; The "Serenade in E minor" Op. 20 by Sir Edward Elgar; and Mozart's Motet K. 165, "Exsultate, Jubilate."*

*The soprano soloist in both the Bach cantata and the Mozart motet was Danielle Talamantes, whose voice displayed not only beauty and power, but the dazzling agility required to negotiate the torrents of embellishment, or "coloratura," demanded in both works. As remarkable as these performances were in themselves, Talamantes' achievement was all the more impressive to those who had attended her solo song recital at Barrister Winery just the night before, and heard her mastery of repertoire that made totally different demands on the performer. For a soprano voice of such size and power as we heard on Saturday, in songs of Turina, Granados and Ellington, also to possess such nimbleness and agility is a very rare phenomenon, indeed. The ovation she received made plain that everyone felt fortunate to have witnessed it."*



## The Spokesman-Review

### Review of Solo Recital for the Northwest Bach Festival

March 5, 2017

Larry Lapidus

*"Over the course of six concerts, the 2017 Northwest Bach Festival presented a wide range of music employing a variety of instruments. Only one instrument was notably missing: the human voice. That gap was filled on Saturday night, as Barrister Winery was filled with song by soprano Danielle Talamantes, partnered by Ivana Cojbasic, pianist.*

*Talamantes selected a program of art songs, i.e. brief poems set to music, by Claude Debussy, Enrique Granados, and Joaquin Turina. She concluded the program with three songs by Duke Ellington, arranged in a manner to show how much they have in common with the art-song tradition.*

*Talamantes intended that the audience be given translations of all the songs on her program, but a glitch in transmission prevented that. Instead, she spoke with the audience, reading some translations in their entirety and summarizing others. By doing this, she immediately created a bond of intimacy that embraced everyone in the room, and that continued unbroken throughout the evening. In chatting with us, she displayed other attributes that proved fundamental to her character as a musician: superbly clear and beautiful diction, an attractive, well-supported voice, extensive understanding of the background and meaning of the music, and, perhaps most important, an earnest desire to seize the deepest feelings of her audience, and never let them go.*

*Accordingly, when she began to sing Debussy's "Chansons de Bilitis," one felt an unbroken link with what had gone before. The voice was just as lovely, natural and relaxed, and the diction just as clear and pure, always an important quality, but especially in the performance of French song. What we had not heard before, of course, was the playing of Cojbasic, which proved to be more than worthy to accompany Talamantes' singing. All of the composers on the program were pianists who contributed much excellent music to the repertoire, but none had so radical an impact on the history of writing for the piano as Debussy, who reinvented piano technique and re-imagined what could be accomplished on the instrument. It is no mean praise to say, then, that Cojbasic showed herself to possess complete mastery of Debussy's challenging writing, and to be an artist capable of unlocking his unique tone-world to an interested listener. On this occasion, the listeners were not merely interested, but spellbound.*

*The ensuing works on the program allowed Talamantes much wider scope in which to deploy her considerable vocal resources than did the delicately tinted Debussy. Her soprano voice possesses considerable power throughout its wide range. It is the sort of voice capable of taking on the most demanding roles of Giuseppe Verdi and of operatic composers of the "verismo" school, such as Pietro Mascagni ("Cavalleria Rusticana"), Ruggero Leoncavallo ("I Pagliacci") and Umberto Giordano ("Andrea Chenier"). It was thrilling to hear a voice of this range and caliber interpreting art-song, and, in truth, there was plenty of passion and suffering portrayed in the songs of Granados and Turina that justified an operatic scale of performance. There were, however, a few points at which Talamantes unleashed the full force of her voice that pushed the envelope so far that it threatened to tear.*

*It was gratifying to see three wonderful Ellington songs receive the respect and loving attention they did on Saturday night: "In a Sentimental Mood," "Solitude" and "Come Sunday." Talamantes proved herself to be a compelling and idiomatic interpreter of music in the popular idiom, something that cannot be said of all of her illustrious predecessors who attempted the journey from the opera house to the cabaret. It should be noted, however, that Ellington wrote the first two songs to be danced to, which would require a clear and regular beat. The arrangements of these numbers are so artfully worked, however, that the beat can get lost, and with it, some of the music's power to touch the heart."*

## **MUSICWEB INTERNATIONAL**

### **Review of Heaven and Earth - A Duke Ellington Songbook**

**January, 2017**

**James Poore**

*"Duke Ellington was one of the great American composers of any genre and is indisputably the most important composer in the history of jazz, especially in the big band idiom. It is significant that Ellington's preferred description for his work was 'American music'. He not only wrote songs especially for classically trained singers like Kay Davis, a coloratura soprano, but also became renowned for his forays into the realm of spiritual music. So, for instance, three live Sacred Concerts were performed between 1965 and 1973, the second of which, in 1968, featured three of the pieces to be found on this album, namely Meditation, Heaven and Almighty God Has Those Angels. Swedish soprano Alice Babs sang Heaven and Almighty God on that occasion. Ellington believed that the voice could serve as an instrument so there are passages in a number of his compositions which were wordless. From time to time they surface on the disc under review here. A multitude of jazz musicians have recorded Ellington's music, apart from the definitive versions that his own orchestras produced over a number of decades. Yet his songs continue also to be performed by artistes from the classical world. This recording brings together an international opera singer, in soprano Danielle Talamantes, and the classical pianist Henry Dehlinger. The couple have collaborated before, notably on the critically acclaimed Canciones españolas album. This is Dehlinger's debut as a jazz arranger. He is responsible for the arrangements on six of the twelve tracks.*

*On listening to this disc, I was reminded of another soprano, Dawn Upshaw, and her album of Rodgers and Hart songs, recorded twenty years ago, with pianist Fred Hersch in support. It shares some of the same characteristics. A superlative voice and sensitive accompaniment, for instance, blessed by exceptional material on which to work. This is not to say that there are no reservations for the jazz lover. I'll return to these later. A couple of tracks struck me as particularly good. In A Sentimental Mood has Talamantes in fine form, displaying the requisite degree of tenderness as well as an appealing jazz inflection in her voice. Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me prompts the thought that Talamantes would work wonders with Ellington's I've Got It Bad And That Ain't Good, omitted from the choices on the album. She is well supported by the empathetic Dehlinger who, on his one solo track later, gives a satisfying interpretation of Meditation. Come Sunday, the opening track, one of Ellington's sacred songs, has a fascinating*

history, having made the journey from the Duke's 1943 jazz symphony, *Black, Brown And Beige*, to the pages of the hymnal of the United Methodist Church in the States. Ms. Talamantes reveals that she possesses a lovely voice and a powerful one, too. The arrangement works well also. *Imagine My Frustration* is a song for a wallflower. There is some real 'down-home' piano from Dehlinger and Danielle emotes passionately, confirming that she possesses one heck of a voice.

*Prelude To A Kiss* is known as a challenging piece by performers and proves to be less suitable to Talamantes' voice than other material on the disc as well as being the least jazz-oriented. The lyrics, incidentally, were written by Irving Gordon, composer and lyricist of the Nat King Cole classic *Unforgettable*. *Don't Get Around Much Any More* is better with a distinct swing from both singer and pianist. Three Ellington standards follow, *Sophisticated Lady*, *I'm Beginning To See The Light* and *Solitude*, all of them acceptable without being particularly exciting (though Dehlinger's thoughtful piano does enhance *Solitude*). The last two tracks are of a different order. *Heaven* with its snatch of *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* and an absolutely sublime moment from Danielle's voice lives up to its title. *Almighty God Has Those Angels* with oblique shades of *St. James Infirmary* on piano at one point, plus an intelligent vocal reading of the theme by Talamantes.

Those who admire the work of the duo will, I am sure, appreciate this latest offering from them. There can be no doubting their quality. It is good, always, to hear Ellington's music, in whatever context, and to appreciate its beauty as well as its diversity. I suspect that anyone who is into 'crossover', that is, mixing or exploring different genres, will enjoy this CD. I wonder, however, whether that old cliché 'less is more' won't apply when it comes to listeners from the jazz community. Talamantes has a beguiling voice but also a powerful one. I found that her impact lessened somewhat when she gave that power free rein, especially when ascending to the upper register. Obviously you can take the girl out of the opera, but you can't take the opera out of the girl! Restraint can be a virtue when singing jazz. It certainly isn't missing from her repertoire as she shows us at other places on this interesting album."

### **Audiophile Audition**

#### **Review of Heaven and Earth - A Duke Ellington Songbook**

**September 16th, 2016**

**Steven Ritter**

"Just to double check, I sought out my review of Danielle Talamantes's debut album from 2014 on MSR Classics called *Canciones espanolas*. Here is what I said: "From the very first second of the very first track, Metropolitan Opera and Carnegie Hall soloist soprano Danielle Talamantes rips into a recital of some of Spain's greatest composers with such daring and furiously emotive singing that you hold your breath at the exuberance and seat-of-your-pants vocal dexterity coming from the speakers. Usually it takes a while for recordings to begin to make their mark, but not in this case; Talamantes besieges us with such exquisite and excitingly idiomatic vocalizing that you leave the listening session in awe."

I hate to be repetitive and verbose, but substitute "some of Spain's greatest composers" with "Duke Ellington", and the paragraph retains all of its truthfulness transferred to this



*new release. These are, of course arrangements—Ellington left few of his piano pieces completely intact for one medium, he simple didn't work like that. But they are stunningly superb, each and every one. In fact, I detect a couple of mistakes in regards to this new release. One is the number of reviewers' intent on calling this a "crossover album". MSR doesn't help the situation much by putting this on its "Jazz" label either. Ellington would certainly have not appreciated the classification as he steadfastly resisted such categorizations.*

*Why does this matter? Because this is certainly, and in my mind unquestioningly, a full-fledged art song recording of one of the major art song composers in American history. It doesn't sound like jazz, even the more familiar songs like In a Sentimental Mood and Don't get around much anymore. Instead, these are well-executed, highly stylized renderings tinged with Ellington's trademark harmonies and inventive melodies, sung with virtuoso perfection by one of our up-and-coming stars. I am convinced that Danielle Talamantes had to make no more stylistic transitions than she would for any other composer; Ellington is an American original like Copland, Barber, Gershwin, and Bernstein—just to list a few of our great song composers—and the care and intellect given to him demonstrates that his importance stretches far beyond the rather narrow confines of "jazz". Indeed, his "band" music is so unlike any of the orchestras playing in his day as to defy any sort of categories. Henry Dehlinger, the accompanist—if such a major role can be reduced to this comparatively mundane descriptor—returns from his first outing with Talamantes to do her even finer justice here. Talamantes is simply brilliant in this music, giving it a knock-your-socks-off performance that leaves you hankering for much, much more. I am quite certain that I will return to this disc quite often, perhaps playing it in sequence with the Hermit Songs and the Twelve Songs on Poems of Emily Dickinson for contrast. Sounds like a great couple of hours to me. Formidably essential listening!"*

## **DC Metro Theater Arts**

### **Review of album Heaven & Earth - A Duke Ellington Songbook**

**June 9th, 2016**

**David Rohde**

*"Danielle Talamantes doesn't see why an opera singer shouldn't sing Duke Ellington, and I bet Duke Ellington wouldn't either. He considered himself simply an American composer who was secure enough to design his writing for the skills of his musicians, and who let many of his compositions acquire their now-iconic lyrics years after the music was set down.*

*For Danielle, who now sings lead soprano roles in several regional opera companies around the U.S. and supporting roles at the Metropolitan Opera, the achievement of placing her sophomore album on the MSR Jazz label is significant. For the listener, the new interpretive experience of hearing these "jazz standards" is distinctive, and not necessarily in the ways you might expect.*

*At the risk of stating a technicality of the physics of sound, Danielle's note placement is exemplary, and creates magnificent overtones in the acoustic of Vienna Presbyterian Church, where Heaven and Earth was recorded. Jazz singers are great at "blue notes" but may sing the main verses and melodies in a pedestrian, piano-imitative way. By*

contrast, Danielle's leading tones cozy right up to their target notes all across the spectrum, with just the right amount of time-spacing to grab your ears and not let go. A chromatic opening to "Prelude to a Kiss," leading all the way to a high, beautifully meandering vocal ending with every note a new surprise, highlights this concept. Less than a minute and a half into the album, with "Come Sunday," Danielle situates the start of the last syllable of the phrase "God above" right above where it really belongs, drops down to sing the target note – and then changes her mind, returning to the higher pitch and lingering there for a delicious extra second before going back down to the right note. It's a shimmering effect.

In extensive liner notes, Danielle's commentator Scott Parrish is at pains for you to know where this classically trained soprano uses a restrained rather than full vibrato. But Danielle has many variations on this theme. In one approach she leaps to a high note and begins it with a bit of graininess, then pulls the note together into a straight tone and teases you before widening into her vibrato. Listen to her sing "In a Sentimental Mood" early in the CD and you'll recognize the effect several times later on. Certainly some listeners may miss other facets of jazz singing that they're used to. The songs are pitched higher than their classic recordings with singers such as Mahalia Jackson and Ella Fitzgerald, or Tony Bennett for that matter, and Danielle typically substitutes prettiness for smokiness in her lower tones. A slightly less rhetorical approach than other interpreters gives her a more Latinate "ah" sound and sometimes a special, wider take on ordinarily hard or swallowed American English vowels in words like "Gershwin" and "eternity."

But the CD is also a stage for originality in arrangement and collaborative piano work. Danielle's pianist, Henry Dehlinger, arranged half of the tracks on the CD, and his piano work is often delightfully cliché-free, with his "Sophisticated Lady" particularly notable. Danielle also called on other innovative new arrangers, and Caren Levine delivers big-time on "In My Solitude." If you want to hear a fusion of jazz with contemporary "serious music" modalities, listen to Mr. Dehlinger play Ms. Levine's twisting and climbing chords and snaking counter-lines while Danielle sings long, languid notes, and prepare to be mesmerized. Then enjoy Mr. Dehlinger's substantial piano cadenza before Danielle returns for a virtuoso vocal conclusion."

Danielle closes with three of Ellington's lesser-known religiously themed works from his 1968 Second Sacred Concert at New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine. With the civil rights-inflected positive spirituality of "Come Sunday" having opened Danielle's disk, these selections provide an apt finish to a truly innovative recording.

Naples Daily News

April 25th, 2016

Review of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* with Gulfshore Opera

Harriet Heithaus

"Soprano Danielle Talamantes was the blessing of the evening as the headstrong, independent heroine Adina. If this, as Talamantes has said, is her first Donizetti opera, we can't wait for her second. Vaulting every coloratura device, including colorful runs, with ease and impeccable phrasing, Talamantes' silvery voice created an Adina to be aspired to. The vocal sparring between her and Musa Ngqungwana on "Lo son ricco e tu sei bella (I am rich and you are beautiful)" is a textbook model on how to sing the village square battle of wits between self-appointed emcee Dulcamara and Adina."

**Charlotte Sun Herald**  
**Review of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* with the Gulfshore Opera**  
**April 20th, 2016**  
**Bill Jones**

*"Nationally acclaimed soprano Danielle Talamantes was excellent in her performance of the fair lady Adina. Her magnificent voice filling the center and her acting superb."*

**The Washington Post**  
**Review of Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* with the National Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorale**  
**April 3rd, 2016**  
**Joan Reinthaler**

*"Soprano Danielle Talamantes did most of the heavy lifting in the Haydn and, even with a huge voice that carried easily over the chorus and orchestra, handled the coloratura cleanly."*

*The Washington Post*  
*December 20th, 2015*

*Review of Handel's *Messiah* with the National Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorale*  
*Cecelia Porter*

*"Soprano Danielle Talamantes coupled rich vibrancy with stellar fluency, even in the most involved ornamentation."*

**DC Metro Theater Arts**  
**Review of Handel's *Messiah* with the National Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorale**  
**December 20th, 2015**  
**Lauren Katz**

*"Talamantes' soprano voice was angelic, and the pure, smooth vocal quality of her vibrato rang throughout the concert hall."*

**The Washington Post**  
**Review of Haydn's *Creation* with the Cathedral Choral Society**  
**October 19th, 2015**  
**Joe Banno**

*"Much of the expressive power of "The Creation" rests with the soloists, and the three here were well chosen. The luminous shimmer, bright finish and clarion high notes of soprano Danielle Talamantes brought pure sunshine to everything she sang."*

**Fanfare Magazine**  
**Review of Canciones Españolas**

## July/August

### Carla Maria Verdino-Süllwold

*"Soprano Danielle Talamantes's debut album is a pleasing and stylish collection of songs by three Spanish composers whose careers and musical goals intertwined in the early years of the 20th century. Partnered by pianist Henry Dehlinger, Talamantes has programmed an interesting and subtly nuanced recital of the music of Enrique Granados, Manuel de Falla, and the less-frequently performed Joaquin Turina. Both Andalusians, Turina and de Falla became acquainted in Madrid and later belonged to the Parisian musical circle which included Debussy, Ravel, and Dukas in the years between 1905 and 1914. Granados, who had been a student in Paris from 1887 to 1889, presided over the Spanish music of his day as an elder statesman, and as such, both de Falla and Turina were inspired by his work. The bond all three shared was one not only of mutual admiration and friendship, but also of national pride, and the songs on this recording reflect the composers' attempts to express the soul of their people in aria and song.*

*Talamantes possesses a velvety, dark-hued soprano that has a limpid seductiveness appropriate to this music. Her instrument is well placed and even throughout the registers; she produces a firm, centered tone that is especially haunting in its upper reaches. Dehlinger provides sensitive if sometimes self-effacing accompaniment.*

*The recital opens with "La Maya y el Ruiseñor" from Granados's opera Goyescas (1915), in which Talamantes shapes the lush Romantic lines of the maiden with a sweeping abandon, partnered by Dehlinger's piano voicing the nightingale. There follows Siete Canciones amorosas, Granados's 1913 series set to pre-1700 Castilian poems from Spain's Siglo d'oro. These are songs of chivalry and courtly love, ranging over a wide palette of emotional and musical color. Among these little gems are a tender lament of a young girl disappointed in love ("Mira que soy niña"), a luminous aubade ("Mañanica era"), an upbeat dance tune ("Serranas de Cuenca"), the dramatic, almost operatic "Gracia mia," and the plaintive lament of the lover from afar in "Desúbrase el pensamiento" with its exquisite vocalise and morendo finish.*

*While Granados mined aristocratic Spanish Medieval verse for inspiration, de Falla's 1914 Siete canciones populares españolas takes its inspiration from folk tunes and literature. Drawing from the cultures of many regions in Spain, he creates songs which use dance rhythms, asymmetrical phrases, modal harmonies, and evocations of classical guitar. This group calls for more vivid participation from the piano, which frequently imitates the rhythms and percussive string sound of the guitar, and Dehlinger rises to the challenge. He is especially effective in the driving harmony underscoring the voice in "Seguidilla murciana" and in the rumbling, crashing chords of the aria-like final song, "Polo." Talamantes runs the gamut from cheeky ("Jota") to tender lullaby ("Nana") to wrenching lament ("Polo").*

*Perhaps her strongest vocal interpretations, however, come in the final Tres Arias, op. 26 (1923) by Turina. These three settings of 19th-century poems, each in very different modes, have a mysterious delicacy that captures the lure of Spain. "Romance" is a*

*frontier ballad about a victorious Moor who returns to Cordoba only to find his beloved is no longer true. Turina shapes the narrative with bold, dramatic strokes, coloring it with a patina of idealized Moorish "orientalia." Talamantes proves herself an effective narrator, sensitive to the tensions of the tale. "El Pescador" is a silvery siren song in which one feels the influence of the French Impressionist composers, and it allows the soprano to show off her florid singing and the magic of her delicate piano. The third aria returns to the Romantic ardor of the first, as it recounts the tale of a wanderer lured by his beloved's eyes which appear first like suns and then like will o'wisps. The references to Schubert/Müller's Winterreise imagery mark this richly textured romantic outpouring and allow Talamantes and Dehlinger to finish the recital with a big, dramatic flourish.*

*The recording is accompanied by an essay on the three composers and their works, as well as by the texts in Spanish and English (in Dehlinger's translations). MSR notes that the audio format on this high-resolution CD has not been compressed, and urges listeners to play it on a high-quality system and to "turn it up." The effect on mine was a warm, rounded naturalness that was most appealing."*

**Gramophone**  
**Review of Canciones españolas**  
**May 2015**  
**Laurence Vittes**

*"Young American soprano Danielle Talamantes's seductive recital of Spanish songs and arias stands out from the crowd for Henry Dehlinger's exquisite piano-playing, the opportunity to hear Joaquin Turina's Tres Arias, Op 26, and the gorgeous MSR Classics recording.*

*This combination comes together most persuasively in Falla's Siete Canciones populares españolas; Talamantes shines radiantly as if the composer had been writing specifically for her voice, and Dehlinger's vibrantly colourful palette instantaneously matches her emotions without ever obscuring her vocal beauty. When 'Nana' arrives, it immediately becomes one of those audiophile experiences in which every sound is captured in detail so naturally placed within its acoustic environment - in this case Vienna Presbyterian Church in Virginia near Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts - that it can serve as a touchstone for capturing musical excellence.*

*After the familiar Granados and Falla sets, which have become emblematic of a certain type of exotic Spanish musical panache, Turina's 13-minute set of three songs - composed in the same year that his opera Jardin de oriente opened in Madrid - introduces a more courtly but no less passionate attitude to love; in the opening, six-minute 'Romance', it magically transforms the formal heraldic gallantry of a Moorish knight into an intimate, ennobling song of love and death. Talamantes is superb the fisherman's love song 'El Pescador', and in 'Rima' revels in Turina's Technicolor exotic side.*



*There are good booklet-notes by William Craig Krause, and complete texts including excellent English translations by Dehlinger which particularly catch the rhythms of the poetry. "*

**American Record Guide**  
**Review of Canciones Españolas**  
**April, 2014**  
**Erin Heisel**

*"Talamantes sings with great warmth and consistently even tone in her entire range; she is stylistically perfect and never indulgent. I like Dehlinger's playing, too--strong and clear in every piece. These two aren't afraid to take risks, either. Their performances are bold and deliberate.*

*I've heard the Falla songs several times in the past year and this is by far the best. 'El Paño Moruno', 'Seguidilla Murciana', and 'Polo' were so exciting I barely recognized them, and this interpretation of 'Nana' felt new to me. Dare I say it? Talamantes's vocal choices make the pieces sound somehow more Spanish. We don't hear as much Turina as we do the other two composers, and his Three Arias are big, dramatic songs. Talamantes and Dehlinger are perfect; the music was practically leaping out of my speakers.*

*An outstanding program. Excellent notes, texts, and translations (the latter by Dehlinger, incidentally)."*

**Musicweb International**  
**Review of Canciones Españolas**  
**Posted on April 9, 2015**  
**By Göran Forsling**

*"Soprano" says the cover of this CD and Danielle Talamantes certainly sings soprano roles but her vocal timbre, as heard in this programme, is rather a dark mezzo. Many of the great interpreters of this repertoire have also been mezzos, Conchita Supervia and Teresa Berganza to name but two. She opens with The Maiden and the Nightingale from the opera Goyescas, originally a suite for piano inspired by the paintings of Goya, but later reworked to an opera. You notice at once the delicious piano playing and the deeply involved singing, slow with heavy rubato, almost improvisatory. The fairly short opera has never been established in the standard repertoire but is occasionally performed. It was premiered at the Metropolitan Opera on 28 January 1916 in a double bill alongside Leoncavallo's Pagliacci, with Giovanni Martinelli and Giuseppe De Luca in the cast. The premiere was so successful that the composer was invited by President Woodrow Wilson to give a piano recital at the White House, which indirectly caused Granados's death. He had to postpone his voyage home to Europe and the ship he and his wife later chose was torpedoed by a German submarine in the English Channel on 26 March.*

*Canciones amorias (Love Songs) from 1915 are mostly settings of anonymous poems but there are also some known poets from the early 17th century, one of them being Lope de Vega (tr. 8). Mira que soy niña (Look, I'm just a little girl) is sung with fine dynamic shading, Mañanica era (It was daybreak) is slow and atmospheric with hypnotic accompaniment. Serranas de Cuenca (Mountain girls of Cuenca) is lively and dancing. Gracia mia (My graceful one) has very clear Spanish flavour. Lloraba la niña (The girl wept) is sad and the listener doesn't miss that, even without knowing the text "The girl wept, and with reason". The Lope de Vega setting also deals with weeping – a very intense song.*

*Manuel de Falla's Seven Spanish Folk Songs is well-known territory and I have to admit that Danielle Talamantes' readings are competitive, even against the really great names. Her beautiful inward Asturiana is something to return to, as is the wild Jota and the caressing Nana.*

*Joaquín Turina's Tres arias were composed in 1923. The first is a long "frontier ballad", where the central character is a Moor, who has just defeated the Christians at Toledo. The second is a fisherman singing to his beloved, while Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer's Rima is a poem where the poet is caught by the eyes of some unknown creature. I feel myself led by your eyes / But where they lead me, I do not know. The latter is a strong piece impressively sung. It actually haunted me for quite some time after my listening session. Talamantes certainly has that hard-to-define capacity to communicate with the listener. The support Henry Dehlinger provides at the piano further enhances this in no unimportant way. A disc to savour.*

## **The Gazette**

**Review of the Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*  
January 15, 2015**

**By Diana Nollen**

*"Rarely has a nod to the past, present and future worked as well as in the Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre's production of "Don Giovanni." Judging from the seamless quality of Wednesday's final dress rehearsal, audiences for tonight's opening and Sunday's repeat at the Paramount Theatre are in for a visual and aural treat that will be hard to top.*

*Danielle Talamantes as Donna Anna...nothing short of brilliant in impassioned arias, drawing shouts of "brava" from the few folks watching the rehearsal. Jonathan Blalock has a moment of magnificence, as well, as Anna's fiance, Don Ottavio, completely conflicted over his task of avenging the wrongs committed to his Anna. The range and depth of his emotion are stunning, matched only by Talamantes' love song in which her shimmering high notes float on air."*

## **Performing Arts: 2014 in Review**

**A look back at top performances and highlights of the Washington arts scene.**

**December 26 2014**

**By Patrick D. McCoy**

*"Recordings, sopranos and divas: You don't have to go very far to find star-quality opera singers, especially sopranos. Two talented sopranos embarked on unique concert and recording projects. Danielle Talamantes recently hosted a launch recital for her new CD "Canciones españolas" featuring the music of Spanish composers not commonly recorded. Accompanied by pianist Henry Dehlinger, the recording is a wonderful musical exploration of vocal repertoire that sometimes does not get equal attention in the concert hall. "*

**DC Metro Theatre Arts**

**Review of Debut album Canciones españolas**

**December 23, 2014**

**David Rhode**

"If Bach, Beethoven and Brahms are the "Three B's" of the German musical tradition, then it remains a mystery why only a fraction of the attention is paid to the three giants of Spanish classical music. Their names may not be alliterative, but Enrique Granados, Manuel de Falla, and Joaquín Turina delight almost everyone who is lucky enough to encounter them.

*Going straight for this opportunity to avoid the mainstream, Washington's own Danielle Talamantes makes what I consider to be the debut album of the year, **Canciones españolas** (Spanish Songs), a beautifully constructed collection of this trio's folk songs, art songs, and arias for soprano. And Danielle's recording serves as an apt warm-up to her upcoming debut as Frasquita in the Metropolitan Opera's production of Carmen. For many listeners, the middle section of the CD may be the most accessible. In seven Spanish folk songs, Manuel de Falla combines Romantic-era or 19th century basic musical tonalities, early 20th century French harmonies reminiscent of Claude Debussy, and heavily Spanish-inflected rhythms into short, aphoristic poem-songs that Danielle turns into sheer entertainment.*

*Familiar to many people will be "Jota," a playful tune that happens to presage Rodgers & Hammerstein's "People Will Say We're In Love" (from Carousel) by a few decades with the reverse, but equally ironic, observation, "They say we're not in love because they don't see us talk." In "Jota," accompanist Henry Dehlinger's piano sets up the tune with riffs that sound like a Spanish guitar before Danielle rings out the melody. But what's especially fascinating about the set of Falla's folk songs is that the less-familiar songs immediately before and after "Jota" contain bluesy notes on which Danielle lingers to great effect. One of these songs is a lullaby and the other presents the image of a weeping tree matching the weeping of the singer, making the lingering in the air of the Spanish blues especially evocative.*

*And if you're looking for operatic drama in Falla's songs, don't worry: it comes in the sixth of the set of seven songs, when Danielle lets loose with the lyrics, "Your treacherous eyes I shall bury, you don't know how much it hurts." (The entire CD is in Spanish but is translated in the liner notes booklet.) Falla's writing and Danielle's singing here would fit perfectly into an Italian opera.*

*More challenging for the listener on the disk are three longer story-songs by Falla's slightly younger contemporary, Joaquín Turina. These are from a genre called "frontier ballads" and speak of an idealized Spanish past, often casting a Moorish historical background against the human emotion of each song's protagonist. In one, the narrator – Danielle – tells of a victorious Moorish guerrero (or warrior captain) who takes Spanish prisoners but returns home to find his lover has left him for another, upon which the captain releases the captives and their spoil "as there is no one for me to give them to." The arresting nature of the songs comes from Danielle's personal development in singing and acting/narrating, as she discussed in **my recent interview with her**. It's even more telling when you realize the CD was recorded right in the sanctuary of Vienna Presbyterian Church where she grew up.*

*The beginning of the album is an aria from an actual Spanish opera, "La maja y el ruiseñor" ("The Maiden and the Nightingale") from Goyescas by Enrique Granados. At the beginning and end of the song, Henry Dehlinger's superb skitterings across the piano represent the flitting about and singing of the nightingale of the song. They beautifully introduce the full partnership between singer and pianist that Danielle specifically set out to present in her debut CD. Henry's background as a past student of Spanish literature at the University of Valencia in Spain was as important as Danielle's operatic and personal background – her father is Mexican-American – but that was just the start of many influences that led to this triumphant recording. Major kudos to them both."*

### **New York Concert Review**

**A review of Bob Chilcott's *Requiem* at Alice Tully Hall**

**Posted on May 26, 2014**

**By Jeffrey Williams**

*"Mr. Chilcott proved himself to be an able conductor, who was completely immersed in the work. One could sense that he was performing the choral parts in tandem with the chorus. Soprano Danielle Talamantes and tenor Christian Reinert were revelations as well in their refined and emotionally powerful performances. The last measures of the *Lux aeterna*, featuring a soft ascending figure in the upper register, were sung by soprano Danielle Talamantes with a perfect diminuendo al niente, or to complete silence, and a child-like innocence that was exquisitely controlled and crystalline in its clarity. It was as if an angel were ascending into the heavens – a simple, but stunning effect. The audience immediately leapt to their feet to reward the composer with a justly earned ovation."*

### **Audiophile Audition**

**March 2014**

**Steven Ritter**

*"From the very first second of the very first track, Metropolitan Opera and Carnegie Hall soloist Danielle Talamantes rips into a recital of Spain's greatest composers with such*

*daring and furiously emotive singing that you hold your breath at the exuberance and seat-of-your-pants vocal dexterity coming from the speakers. Usually it takes a while for recordings to being to make their mark, but not in this case; Talamantes besieges us with such exquisite and excitingly idiomatic vocalizing that you leave the listening session in awe. There are not too many debut recordings where something like this can be said.*

*A while back I was quite enthralled with a similar program by Bernarda Fink. While only the Falla is duplicated—good news for me since I don't have to think about ditching one of these albums—Talamantes makes the solid and always-reliable Fink sound tame in comparison, which she certainly is not in isolation. But while Fink is studied—in the good sense of the word—and always the professional, Talamantes's voice seems to emerge from the pages of the music as if it was her voice that Falla, Turina, and Granados were hearing when they first set ink to paper. The voice is effortless in presentation though I am sure it is not in execution, but the way she so grippingly grapples with this music, like it was all learned in the cradle, is simply electrifying.*

*The music is hardly unknown to seasoned songsters; if you like art song you know these pieces well, and some of the greatest interpreters who ever lived have set them down. Talamantes gives no quarter to any of them, and in many respects tops them all. Pianist Henry Dehlinger has to be given a lot of credit for the total success of this album with his adroit and sparkling instrumental partnership. The brilliance and beautifully captured recording at the Vienna Presbyterian Church in Vienna, Virginia (who would have guessed?) supplies the perfect platform for these excellent readings. My only complaint is that I wish there were 20 more minutes—and there could have been. I am stunned. This is easily one of the best recordings of the year."*

### **ConcertoNet.com**

**March 2014**

**Charles Pope Jr.**

*"Danielle Talamantes belongs to a new generation of American singers characterized by solid training and impressively commanding technique. This enables a degree of genuine versatility so that a performer best known for opera, orchestral and choral work also has the range and base competence to tackle lieder and other art songs.*

*And so, while the primary items on Ms. Talamantes' current curriculum vitae are indeed high profile opera and orchestral engagements, she is making her recording debut with an album of Spanish songs, which she performs with commendable skill, intelligence and artistry. Spanish folk and art songs have long had a strong core appeal, though the genre tends to be rarefied: a new artist is competing automatically with vintage recordings of Victoria de los Angeles, Teresa Berganza, José Carreras and, further back, Conchita Supervia who reportedly was idolized by the late Jennie Tourel, New York's reigning mezzo and vocal mentor during the mid-twentieth century.*

*Talamantes may not prompt you to throw out your older LPs and CDs, but her debut is striking, authoritative and decidedly attractive to hear – this reviewer has just ordered extra copies as handy Christmas gifts. Her accompanist, Henry Dehlinger, an experienced and versatile soloist, provides fine, superbly calibrated support throughout*



*the program. His contribution as both a performer and a partner are a major component in the venture's high quality.*

*The disc opens with Granados' familiar "La maja y el ruiseñor" ("The Maiden and the Nightingale") (from Goyescas), and every moment is ravishing, sensuous and discreetly dramatic. Talamantes does not make an obvious effort to scale down her impressive spinto voice. Rather, she navigates the song with a finesse and subtlety comparable to a great pianist performing encores (I found myself recalling Vladimir Horowitz performing his Carmen Variations in the late 1960s.) The disc continues with more Granados, Canciones amatorias (Love Songs), then de Falla's familiar Seven Popular Spanish Songs, and finally Turina's Three Arias, Opus 26.*

*Listening to the CD three times, I gave up attempting to make detailed notes or observations. There was simply no need to do so, even for a reviewer, when this is a recording which very successfully is intended to be heard and enjoyed by its target listeners."*

**Audio Society of Atlanta**  
**Review of debut album Canciones españolas**  
**October 2014**  
**Phil Muse**

*Canciones españolas (Spanish songs) marks the recording debut of rising soprano Danielle Talamantes. More than a little mystery surrounds this attractive new voice, as there is a lack of vital information on all the internet websites concerning her nationality or birthplace (you can forget about birth date: for singers, that is more jealously guarded than State Department secrets). We don't know who she studied under or where she completed her education. The earliest fact we are given about her is that she made her Carnegie Hall debut in 2007. Presumably, she appeared in this world, like Venus or Minerva, fully grown.*

*All kidding aside, Talamantes has the perfect voice for this recital – intelligent, well-modulated, and sensitive to all the emotions in a program of highly nuanced songs by three of Spain's greatest composers: Enrique Granados, Manuel de Falla, and Joaquin Turina. From the very beginning of the program, La Maja y el Ruiseñor (The Maiden and the Nightingale) from Granados' opera Goyescas, with the brief but eerily effective piano introduction by accompanist Henry Dehlinger setting the nocturnal scene, we know we are in for a rare experience in lyrics that speak eloquently, as only Spanish songs can, of the amorous longing, joy and despair of those who fall in love. "O, love is like a flower," Granados tells us in the aria at the head of the program, "A flower at the mercy of the sea," and we hear this message in various guises in his seven Canciones amatorias that follow it.*

*Falla comes next, with 7 Popular Spanish songs (Siete Canciones Populares Españolas) that are, typically, as much dances as they are songs, ranging in tone from the playfulness of a woman chiding her fickle lover in Seguidilla murciana ("I compare you to money / that passes / from hand to hand, / which in the end is wiped out, / and, believing it to be fake, / no one takes it!") to the anguished lover's complaint in Polo: "Love be damned, damned, / and damn him who made me understand it! / ¡Ay!"*

*Last, we have Tres Arias by Turina, three songs in which Talamantes' sensitivity to mood and nuance is put to maximum advantage. These songs, works of the same exalted high imagination as the composer's Fantastic Dances, also contain such moments of irresistible charm as the fisherman's song to his sweetheart (El Pescador): "Get into my little boat, / my sweet beloved beauty, / let the shadowy night / be brightened by your face."*

**The Washington Post**

**Review of Mozart's *Requiem* with the City Choir of Washington**

**October 12th, 2014**

**Cecelia Porter**

*"Urging on his chorus and orchestra, Shafer gave the Mozart a dramatic inevitability. The soloists were soprano Danielle Talamantes (a rising Metropolitan Opera star), mezzo Alexandra Christoforakis, tenor Norman Shankle (also a Met singer) and bass Kerry Wilkerson. I have heard countless fine vocal quartets in Mozart's Requiem. But, so far, none have surpassed the higher realms of art that Sunday's quartet reached. In powerfully burnished solos and seamless ensemble, the quartet voiced the overpowering, rapturous grief and piercing drama that comes right out of Mozart's operatic writing."*

**The Baltimore Sun**

**Soprano Soloist in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Baltimore Choral Arts Society**

**May 1st, 2012**

**Tim Smith**

*"Tom Hall's well-chosen tempos were often inflected with telling rubato, and he revealed a keen ear for dramatic contrasts. Most impressive was his handling of the close to Part One and, especially, Part Two, adding an extra burst of emotional weight to each. The finely honed choristers produced a mighty volume as effectively as a tender pianissimo, and articulated the text with considerable nuance. The Peabody Children's Chorus -- a busy weekend for these kids -- once again made a magical contribution. Among the soloists, soprano Danielle Talamantes sang exquisitely, savoring the elegant curve of Mendelssohn's melodic lines."*

**Austin Peay University/Clarksville Community Concert Association**

**Recital Review**

**October 25, 2010**

**By Sue Freeman Culverhouse**

*"It is the dream of every small town concert series to discover the next opera star before her name becomes a household word. The Clarksville Community Concert Association has done just that in scheduling the Friday night concert of Danielle Talamantes, whose name one hopes to see in lights at the Metropolitan Opera in the near future on a regular basis."*

*Playing to sold out audiences elsewhere, she was greeted by a disappointing turnout in Clarksville Friday night; 136 people who will some day be able to say they saw Ms. Talamantes prior to her becoming the international star she deserves to be. It was tantamount to being able to say that one saw Beverly Sills or Kiri Te Kanawa before either of them performed at the Met.*

*With the graceful figure and beauty of a younger version of the beloved mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade, Ms. Talamantes takes the stage with an assurance of one who has lived there for more than her own tender years. She uses her body as a supple extension of the lyrics to express emotions ranging from the saddest mourning to the happiest of jokes. Her unusual ability to display the gist of the music with her mobile lip movement is fascinating to watch. It was easy to imagine Ms. Talamantes on the operatic stage as a captivating diva.*

*She opened her program with five of Robert Schumann's art songs to be followed by Ach ich fühls from Mozart's Die Zauberflöte. Then came Enrique Granados' Canciones Amatorias, a series of seven songs in Spanish. Igor Stravinsky's "No Word from Tom" from The Rake's Progress preceded Three Poems by Fiona MacLeod, set to music by Charles T. Griffes. The scheduled program ended with Ombre légère from Dinorah by Giacomo Meyerbeer. Ms. Talamantes treated her audience to an encore in which she expressed her true desire to receive a rave review for her performance, which she certainly deserved. The concert was worthy of Carnegie Hall and a New York audience of highly skilled classical musicians.*

*The spectacular program was one in which Ms. Talamantes revealed her perfect pitch through using her voice in incessant leaps that would have almost certainly damaged the voice of a lesser talent. Her wide vocal range revealed an instrument that is consistent from the highest to lowest of tones; she is able to sing not only the fortissimos required of high notes but perfect pianissimos in low ones as well. Her sparkling version of Ombre légère brought her audience from across the footlights into her corner; prior to that coloratura exhibition, the applause had been supremely polite but not exuberant. With the display of versatility of the Meyerbeer, she captured her audience and made them her own. The delightful encore confirmed the artistic and acting talent that makes Ms. Talamantes not only a superb singer but an actress who can create the role of whatever character she chooses to portray.*

*Ms. Talamantes was a gracious hostess for her concert as she spoke with her audience between sections of the performance. Admitting that she was preparing for her role as Pamina, she sang the Mozart with expertise; her preview of her coming visit with the Sacramento Opera foretells an unforgettable performance that should propel her even further into the international spotlight.*

*Not to be overlooked is Joy Schreier, the superb accompanist who also serves as one of Ms. Talamantes' voice coaches. Truly an artist at the piano, Ms. Schreier has been called "an orchestra at the piano" by none other than Plácido Domingo, the foremost tenor of our day. To hear Ms. Schreier play is to be almost tempted to ignore the soloist. She not only "breathes" with the singer, but supports with a musicality that creates a true duet. The sometimes overlooked role of the accompanist is critical to the success*

*of any soloist. The skillful pianist can cover any tiny bobble and make it appear as if it were possibly meant to occur. Ms. Schreier is perfection itself in playing exactly as the singer's notes are sung and with the correct amount of volume to support yet never overpower the performer herself. She is the dream accompanist that a singer hopes to find at some point in one's lifetime. Since Ms. Schreier's accompaniment was flawless, Ms. Talamantes has correctly chosen to work with the best.*

*This concert was a never-to-be-forgotten evening of music. Opera lovers who were able to attend will long remember their fortune in hearing these two superior talents. The Clarksville Community Concert Association is to be congratulated for presenting this stellar performance."*

## **Reviews & Comments-Danielle Talamantes as Violetta, Fremont Opera**

### ***La Traviata (Fremont Opera) Review - A Summer of Camelias*** **September 2010**

**By Philip G. Hodge**

*"Last night I attended my sixth performance of La Traviata this summer, this one by the Fremont Opera. And every time there were tears in my eyes as the orchestra played the final notes of Act III.*

*....And when Danielle Talamantes finally appeared the audience rose as one to greet her portrayal of Violetta in standing applause.*

*As the orchestra was playing the overture, Ms Talamantes was demonstrating her acting skills without opening her mouth except for a near-silent cough now and then. By her facial expression and body language she told us that she was a sick woman, that she was so-o-o tired, that doing anything was difficult and probably not worth the effort, and that life was probably not worth living.*

*The overture finishes and blends into the opening music of Act I. Her party guests are arriving! In an instant she rises to the occasion and puts on her party face. She is all smiles and laughter, flitting from one guest to another with flirtatious looks and suggestive body language. She had already won our hearts - and then she started to sing - and we might just as well end my review right here and jump ahead to the standing ovation mentioned above. If you were there, you don't need my words; if you were not there, my words would be wholly inadequate.*

*We are going to hear more about young Ms Talamantes. (I say "young" because she received her Bachelor's degree (cum laude) in 1998 and sang her first role (Yum-Yum) only 7 years ago. According to the program notes, she will be a cover for several roles at the New York Met this coming season. I certainly don't want to wish bad luck on any of the Met*

*stars, but let me put it this way: IF she is covering one of the roles in an opera on the Met HD schedule, and IF the singer she is covering should, at the last minute, be unable to go on for a scheduled performance, THEN I hope that the performance in question is the one on Met HD."*

**The Independent**  
**By Susan Steinberg**  
**September 2010**

**FREMONT'S TRIUMPHANT "TRAVIATA"**

*It's not often that an operagoer is fortunate enough to witness the birth of a star. This reviewer was lucky to hear an ebullient young soprano burst onto the stage of NYC's old City Center Opera: Beverly Sills. Then, in his SFO debut, an unfamiliar tenor stunned us in "La Boheme": Luciano Pavarotti.*

*Now it seems that lightning has struck again in the person of Danielle Talamantes, brilliant star of Fremont Opera's recent "La Traviata". You needn't take just my word for her excellence. The winner of many prestigious opera awards, including the 2010 Irene Dalis Vocal Competition, she has been chosen to cover major roles at the Metropolitan Opera for their new season.*

*This lovely lithe soprano gave perhaps the most moving portrayal of Verdi's doomed heroine in my 50+ year memory of famous Violettas. From pleasure-seeking to passionate to pathetic, she embodied all the tragic stages of a woman awakened to true love only to nobly sacrifice her happiness and die.*

*Even on a warm Sunday summer afternoon, an audience of "mature" listeners rose to a standing, shouting, whistling ovation (many visibly teary) as she took her bows. In accents German, Russian, and French, they could be heard expressing their astonishment at the profound emotional effect of her singing and acting.*

*Many praised the discerning musical judgment of Fremont Opera's Artistic Director David Sloss, who had discovered this extraordinary artist 15 months ago, and sponsored her first Bay Area performance.*

*From her strong opening notes to a final dying outburst, she completely commanded the stage, with body language, facial expressions, and the tiniest hand gestures to complement her virtuoso vocal character portrayal. Never overly histrionic like some famous divas, she conveyed her feeling with exquisite restraint but great visceral impact. It's a rare quality, and will assuredly earn her international acclaim.*



## **TALAMANTES ENCHANTS AS VERDI'S VIOLETTA**

**San Francisco Symphony Examiner**

**August 30, 2010**

**Eman Isadiar**

*"Danielle Talamantes has the pipes, the looks and the smarts for a very promising future in opera. But when you add her impressive Italian diction and acting skills to the mix, you have a bona fide star on your hands. It comes as no surprise that Talamantes will join the nation's largest opera company, Metropolitan Opera, as an understudy next spring.*

*Her rendition of "Sempre libera" ("Forever Free") of Act 1-where Violetta sings of her inner conflict between her attraction to Alfredo and her desire to stay free and single-was one of the production's brightest highlights. Another stunning Talamantes moment was the aria "Morir si giovane" ("To Die so Young") of the last scene, which left the audience breathless and reaching for the elusive Kleenex pack."*

*"Danielle was absolutely beautiful. The voice is radiantly lovely, and she sings with consummate musicality. The audience loved her - everyone stood up for her curtain call. One of the orchestra members, who's played a number of shows at SF Opera and elsewhere, said, "Best 'Sempre libera' I have ever heard!" David Sloss - Artistic Director & Principal Conductor of Fremont Opera, La Traviata, August 28, 2010*

## **Press Release from Opera San Jose**

**Irene Dalis Competition**

**May 22, 2010**

*"Four of the ten finalists this year were mezzo-sopranos," said Irene Dalis, who herself enjoyed a successful international opera career as a mezzo-soprano before retiring to her hometown of San José in 1977. "Amazingly, we had just one soprano among the finalists—but she was, indeed, amazing. Danielle Talamantes demonstrated such magnificent vocal agility and mastery that she simply took everyone's breath away! And for the third consecutive year, our audience members showed just how knowledgeable they are by picking as their favorite the same singer who won over our distinguished panel of judges."*